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THE MEDIAEVAL MIMUS

PART I

Historians of literature generally assign the parentage of the mediaeval minstrel—spielmann, troubadour, and trouvère—to the Roman mimus. I do not. I propose to examine the literary records of the so-called Dark Ages in Europe, to show that the living poetry of this time did not derive from the Roman mimus either directly or indirectly, that it was rather the instinctive and native art of its own day. Before we move a foot, however, it is necessary to define the word mimus. As used by critics it means three things:

1. A dramatic performance popular in Rome until the fall of the empire.

2. Any sort of realistic imitation of life—skit, dance, poem, song, juggling, pantomime, acrobatic feat, trained animals—in short, Roman vaudeville.

3. A Roman vaudeville artist or entertainer.

It is absolutely useless to speak of mimus as the source of mediaeval minstrelsy unless we know at each step just what is meant by mimus. First then let us find out what we may about it.

1. *Mimus: Dramatic Performance*

There are three types of mimus which are sometimes considered dramatic: (a) Mimic Drama, the sole remnant of which is *perhaps* No. 413 in the Oxyrhynchus papyrus;¹ (b) Sung Mimus, the sole remnant of which is *perhaps* the "erotic fragment" of Grenfell, which Wilamowitz reconstructed and called the "Maid's Lament;"² (c) Recited Mimus, like those of Sophron, Herodas,³ and Theocritus (especially Nos. ii, xiv, xv).

¹ Edd. Grenfell-Hunt, Part iii (1903); cf. Winter, *De mimis oxyrhynchis* (1906), dissertation.

² *Göttinger Nachrichten* (1896), pp. 209 ff.; cf. also Leo, "Die Plautinischen cantica und die hellenistische Lyrik," *Göttinger Abhandlungen* (1897); "Die Komposition der Chorlieder Senecas," *Rheinisches Museum* (1897), pp. 509 ff., and "Der Monolog im Drama," *Göttinger Abhandlungen* (1908), p. 117.

³ The mimes of Herodas [or Herondas] are now available in Sharpley's excellent verse-translation *A Realist of the Aegean* (1906).

Of these three types of *mimus*, however, no one is necessarily or even presumably a dramatic performance.¹ There is no reason why the confused enthusiasm of Reich² or the fluent narrative of Chambers³ or any evidence which we as yet possess should lead us

¹ Wilamowitz says (*Hermes*, Vol. XXXIV [1899], pp. 207 f.): "What are the mimes? Surely no dramatic type. The narrator makes his appearance either in the marketplace or in a private dwelling, later in the place which is called 'theater' [*schauplatz*], because everything an audience wants to see can be better viewed there. The narrator can be just as well compared with the *γελωτοποιοί* of the West as he can with the aristocratic rhapsodists of the East, who likewise recited pieces of Archilochos and Hipponax. He imitates with drastic comic effect various voices, as is demanded by the dramatic action of his narrative, but in antiquity it was never forgotten that the heroic epic itself belonged to the *γένος μεικτόν*, and the iambus offered the like alternation of voices. Theocritus' 'Adoniazusai' and 'Simaitha' were surely recited first by him. That is no book-poetry; of course he was not writing a book. And in the same way Herodas imitated him in the iambus. Whether a single speaker appears, as in his Keeper of the Brothel, or quite a number, as in his 'Asklepiatusai,' that is all one. God forgive those who believe this sort of thing was really played!"

Sudhaus is equally decided (*Hermes*, Vol. XLI, pp. 269 f.): "A pronounced conservative tendency and a clarity as to the requisites and aims of their art enabled the mimes to remain what they were, and prevented their merging with the higher drama. As numerous utterances prove, the mime was always conscious that his main task was character portrayal. Doubtless for the entertainment of audiences he did play comedy, produce spectacular pieces, and give such farces as the *Charition* of Oxyrhynchos, which might be termed a scurrilous *Iphigenia* but no longer a real mime. He never forgot, however, that *ἡθοποιία* and the picture of life was his true field, and our piece (Oxyrhynchus 413) shows us how, despite a comprehensive action, the whole object of a mime could be made the sustaining of a single character-rôle. If one lays aside pure jugglery and the low types of mimesis, the mime is nothing but *ἡθοποιία*. It is no drama, for how could a form be drama which can do quite without *δράματα*? Action which is everything for a drama is only incidental to the mime, the mime can even exclude action entirely."

² Reich invented the "great mimic drama" in his book *Der Mimus*, Vol. I (1903), although no example of it had descended to us. Later when Grenfell published Oxyrhynchus 413 Reich seized upon it as proof that his "drama" had existed and restated his position in the *Deutsche Literaturzeitung*, Vol. XXIV (1903), coll. 2679 ff., as follows: "From the time of Alexander the Great there arose in the larger Hellenic cities of the Orient the great mimic drama, growing out of the sung and the recited mimes. This so-called mimic hypothesis mingled prose and lyric parts, arias, and cantica. It soon won the stage of Rome and became Latinized. Philistion is the classic of the Greek hypothesis, Publilius Syrus and Decimus Laberius are the great names in the Latin derivative. Throughout the Graeco-Roman empire, in Europe, Asia, and Africa people received the mimic drama with acclaim, rulers and emperors cherished it, and later even the church fathers could not drive it from popular favor."

Unfortunately, the facts in the case do not bear out Reich's contention. In a recent and detailed study of the "Mimus von Oxyrhynchos" Sudhaus remarks (*Hermes*, Vol. XLI [1906], pp. 274, 277): "Reich's invention of the great mimic hypothesis, which flourished as early as the third century B.C. but had then to wait three centuries to find its classic in Philistion, deserves no confutation. It is urgently important to point out that Reich's constructions for the most part do not withstand examination, and that his predecessors, whom he does not treat in very friendly fashion, judged in many things more rightly than he. I say this particularly with reference to several verdicts in Horowitz, *Spuren griechischer Mimen im Orient* (1905)."

³ The opening chapter of Chambers' *Mediaeval Stage* is entitled "The Fall of the Theaters," and he employs therein without definition the words farce, mime, spectacle, performance, stage, theater, plot, and actor. But an examination of his sources shows

to believe it. Theorize about the matter we can, but proofs are lacking.

At first, perhaps, the dramatic mimes *were* low-comedy pieces and farces which shared their popularity with comedies of a higher sort, like those of Plautus and Terence; at first, perhaps, the sung and recited mimes *were* witty dialogues, satirical reflections, topical hits, dramatic portrayal of the life of the day, which alternated at entertainments of the great houses with author's readings, like that of the *Querolus* for example.¹ Both publicly and privately, that is, a definite and skilful dramatic art lent itself to the realistic reproduction of life. But even if this is true of the older character of the mime, when the decay of culture came a change ensued. The mime degenerated until it pandered to the worst instincts of humanity.

2. *Mimus: Roman Vaudeville*

Paegnion was the word for everything beneath the "legitimate" or dramatic type of *mimus*.² If anything mimic was fitted to endure across the fifth century into the European world of the Dark and Middle Ages, surely it was paegnion.

For one might be blind and yet enjoy himself. There was music both vocal and instrumental, there was the squealing and grunting as of pigs, there was the imitation of every animal's bleat, squawk, or bellow. One could be deaf and not miss overmuch, for there were sketches from all types of low-life and side-street, knockdown farces, take-offs, and acrobatic turns. One need not even understand the jargon of the players for an evening's fun, but could go like the

quickly that there is no evidence that any "mimic drama" was ever "acted" in any "play-house" in Rome. Nor will further study uncover such evidence. Cf. Jahn, *Prolegomena ad Persii satiras* (1843); Grysar, "Der römische Mimus," *Wiener Sitzungsberichte*, Vol. XII (1854); Führ, *De mimis Graecorum* (1860); Hörschelmann, "Der griechische Mimus," *Baltische Monatsschrift* (1892); Crusius, *Untersuchungen zu den Mimiamben des Herondas* (1892); Hauler, "Der Mimus von Epicharm bis Sophron," *Xenia austriaca*, Vol. I (1893); Nairn, *The Mimes of Herodas* (1904); Glock, *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Literaturgeschichte*, Vol. XVI (1905).

¹ The *Querolus* (or *Aulularia*) is announced by its author to be not for public presentation but for recitation in the circle of friends, for sociable entertainment, and for the amusement of a dinner party. Cf. Cloetta, *Beiträge zur Literaturgeschichte des Mittelalters*, Vol. I (1890), p. 2.

² Cf. Reich, *Der Mimus*, Vol. I, pp. 417 ff. Sudhaus (*loc. cit.*, p. 265) and Körte (*Neue Jahrbücher für das klassische Altertum* [1903], p. 538) make paegnion the generic term for all representations of real mimes, and consider it the general rather than the subordinate title.

modern tourist to *tingeltangel* or *variété*, sure of his reward. Who would not laugh if his host Trimalchio blew out his cheeks like a bugler, if a slave made mimic music on an earthen lamp and ate fire? Whose face would not burn at the nakedness of person and pantomime and words, which, to quote Plutarch, "intoxicated and stupefied the spirit more than strong wines?"¹

3. *Mimus: Roman Entertainer*

The preceding paragraph on pægnion has told us what to expect of these entertainers. Whatever they may have been in earlier times, in the fifth and sixth centuries the profession of *mimus* was not free from admixture of every kind. *Histrion*, prestigator, *scaenicus*, *tragoedus*, *comoedus*, *thymelicus*, *scurra*, *saltator*, and *mimus* are so variously glossed by early commentators that we are at a total loss to separate the "*artes lubricae*" which they professed. Sidonius, who must be expected to know, says that the *histriones* boasted of doing the same thing as *Philistio*, but *falsely*. Cassiodorus specifically refers to a certain Sabinus as "*histrion*, *equorum moderator et auriga*," to a Thomas as "*auriga, maleficus et magus*." The mimes were dramatic performers of one sort and another, reciters of obscenest jokes, charioteers, high-jumpers, dancers, magicians, sleight-of-hand workers, and ill-doers generally. We are transported from the stage, from the realm of private theatricals, to the tent of the circus and to the lascivious pleasures of dinner tables. Let us be not misled to think the thing otherwise. The men appear in motley or harlequin dress, the women more or less naked. One indulges in *rodomontade* and the absurdest boasting, another gives imitations of human customs and characters, a third portrays lewd matters: to the accompaniment of drums and cymbals a man or woman enters and plays the rôle of prostitute, pander, adulterer, or drunkard. A fourth is conjurer. Any sort of coarse comedy, grimacing, imitation of the cries of animals is welcome.²

Such, then, is the Roman *mimus*, performance and performer, which the Germans knew from the fourth century on at least, and

¹ Cf. *Table-talks*, VII, vii, 4. The unspeakable lasciviousness of Theodora's pantomime which Procopius cites was probably nothing rare.

² Cf. Scherer, *Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung im xi. und xii. Jahrhundert*, p. 12.

knew undoubtedly in three different ways: (1) from personal acquaintance in Italy whither a tribal migration had led them; (2) from hearsay and from the graphic description of returning wanderers; (3) from personal acquaintance in Germany, whither the mimus from the earliest historical times, sallying forth from Roman frontier garrisons, penetrating ever farther, followed the steps of the southern merchant. These things I believe, and I also believe that some Roman mimes outlasted the sixth century a while and continued their profession in Romance territory as late even as the age of Charles the Great, though by no means so long in strictly Germanic territory. Some European minstrels doubtless owed certain of their tricks and turns at first directly or indirectly to mimes. But that the two—minstrel and mime—were for long centuries largely identical, I do not believe, and nothing in the records makes such a creed imperative, or even appealing.

Germanic scop

We are often so occupied in trying to discover what the Germans learned from Italy, that we forget to wonder just what manner of things they brought to Italy with them. The early records concerning Germanic singers and Germanic poetry are too incomplete to give us much definite information. From epic sources like the Anglo-Saxon *Widsith*, *Beowulf*, and *Deor's Complaint* we hear, as we should expect, only of a scop or epic singer. And historical works such as the chronicles of Cassiodorus, Priscus, Paulus Diaconus, and Jordanes, tell us naturally enough of the scopas who sang songs celebrating the deeds of their national heroes, and tell us of no other sort of German poet or poetry. But silence upon a point of this kind means necessarily nothing.

However this be, early epic poetry may be divided into two classes in any of three ways: (1) its origin, (2) its form, (3) its content. That is, (1) whether it was communal [choric] or artistic [individual] in source and utterance; (2) whether it was a ballad [divided into stanzas of an irregular number of verses] or a rhapsodic poem [a continuous series of long-verses without stanzaic division]; (3) whether it was hymnic song in praise of the gods and legendary heroes, or a song celebrating the deeds of great and important his-

torical personages.¹ But, whichever of these three manners of division we adopt, the result is largely the same: two kinds of poetry are the result. The first kind is an old traditional type of epic expression, presumably a common Germanic heritage from the Aryan past; the second kind is, it may be, a gradual development within historic times, coming perhaps into full swing in the fifth and sixth centuries, and including even songs of compliment to members of a ruling dynasty.² The Germanic scop undoubtedly had in his repertory both kinds: "mythische heroendichtung" and "historische heldendichtung." Of the one he was certainly the coryphaeus, of the other, so far as we know, he was the creator.

Was there a professional Germanic jester?

We know about the scop: a distinguished epic singer, often the vassal of a king, honored, praised, and rewarded with the meed of hero.³ Was this the only class of professional entertainer the Germanic peoples knew before their association with the Romans in the fourth and fifth centuries? Did the Germans of their own initiative not go in for realistic comedy and low farce of any kind?

From the records that we now have we cannot argue either for or against the existence of German entertainers of the lighter sort (mountebanks and minstrels) among the Germanic races previous to and during the tribal migrations. Even such mention of satirical

¹ I am not sure that I think much of any of these three methods of classification. In a forthcoming article on Epic and Romance I shall try to deal with old Germanic epic poetry, not as it should be, but as it is.

² Such as those from which Cassiodorus got his list of the ancestors of Amalasuintha, daughter of Theodoric. Cf. *Variar. lib. xi*, cap. 1; Jordanes, *De origine actibusque Getarum*, cap. 14, 17, 48; *Zeitschr. f. deut. Alt.*, Vol. XII, p. 253; Kelle, *Gesch. d. deut. Lit.*, Vol. I (1892), pp. 10 f.

We have no proof that a heroic poetry celebrating the deeds of historical personages did not exist among the earliest Germans, except for the silence of Tacitus regarding the matter, and this is not proof. If this type of poetry was comparatively late, it is interesting to remember that it was either sprung from, or given its greatest impulse by, the poetically gifted Goths. It was two Goths who sang before Attila of his victories, the *citharoedus* Theodoric sent Clodovech was perhaps a Gothic scop (and not an Italian mimus), the Lombard Alboin (*Ælfwine*) is mentioned in *Widsith* (the Goths exerted strong influence upon the epic song of their neighbors the Lombards); and most important of all, most of the popular epic legendary material which has descended to us is of Gothic origin—Ermanrich, the Harlungs, Theodoric, Heime, Witig, Hildebrand and Hadubrand, perhaps Walter of Aquitania; except for the Frankish myth of Siegfried, the Nibelungen story is a poetic work of the Burgundians, a race most closely associated with the Goths.

³ Cf. Köhler, "Ueber den Stand berufsmässiger Sänger im nationalen Epos germanischer Völker," *Germania*, Vol. XV, pp. 27 ff.; Vogt, *Leben und Dichtung der deutschen Spieleute* (1876), pp. 4 f.; Anderson, *The Anglo-Saxon Scop* (1903).

songs as Ausonius makes in the *Mosella* is too vague to be of service,¹ and other references are either too confused or too late in date.² But while it is impossible to present evidence in proof that the early Germans had light entertainment and lyric song as well as heroic ballads, while speculation on this point often leads to purely dogmatic statement,³ it is always worth remembering that some of the comedy and realism, some of the lyrical forms of expression that we meet in Europe from the eighth century on, may be sprung from indigenous roots.⁴ That race which first of the modern cultural nations of Europe gives us merry stories, humorous songs, satires, and lyrics must have borrowed well, if they fetched this whole art from transalpine territory!

¹ For we do not know that the dwellers in the Moselle region during the fourth century were Germans. Cf. *Ausonii opuscula* (*Monumenta Germaniae historica, Auctores*, Vol. V, ii), p. 87, and Kögel, *Pauls Grundriss*, Vol. II, p. 49.

² Laughter-smiths there were in England at the time when the *Exodus* was written (43 *wæron hleahtorsmidum handa belocene*; a reference apparently to the magicians of Egypt; cf. Blackburn, *Exodus and Daniel* [1907], p. 37), but even if *hleahtorsmið* denotes a certain class of entertainer, this profession is not necessarily of early date or of native origin. Little definite is known regarding the functions of the northern þulr [who Männenhoff asserts was the continuator of the entire Northern poetic tradition; *Deutsche Altertumskunde*, Vol. V, p. 300], but certain passages (e. g., *Fafnismál* 34; *Hávamál* stanzas 110-37) indicate that Mr. C. N. Gould is justified in believing commentators have regarded him too seriously. The *Haraldskvaeði* (or *Hrafnsmál*, ca. 900) speaks of jesters and jugglers: *leikari, truðr*. "Andaðr pets a dog without ears, plays foolish tricks and causes the king to laugh. There are also others who, it is said, bear a burning stick of wood through the fire, they have stuck blazing hats beneath their belts [!], these men who deserve a kick." *Truðr* translates *scurra* in the Vulgate describing King David playing on the harp like a rough *truðr*. The juggler was known to Ireland as early as the ninth century or earlier. Professor A. C. L. Brown calls my attention to *clessamnach* in the "Sick Bed of Cuchulinn," an ancient story in the Dun Cow MS (Windisch, *Irische Texte*, Vol. I, p. 206: "sing and act the part of jugglers") and another saga "The Destruction of Da Derga's Palace" tells of the juggler *Tulchuine* and of the three jesters at the fire (Hyde, *Literary History of Ireland*, pp. 391 f.; Whitley Stokes, *Revue celtique*, Vol. XXII [1901], pp. 286, 311).

³ Simply because such speculation is so apt to confuse poetic impulse and poetic achievement, because it assumes that since Germans *may* have had certain literary forms at a given time they actually *did* have them,—Kelle thus ascribes to the Germans of the first century sword-dance and drama (*schauspiel*), incantations, gnomic verses, and very possibly satires, love-songs, dance-ditties. Scherer accords even the old Aryans love-songs "in which a feeling for nature and the inner life were harmonized or contrasted;" cf. Scherer, *Kleinere Schriften*, Vol. I, p. 697 and *Gesch. d. deut. Lit.*¹⁰, p. 7; Heinzel, *Quellen und Forschungen*, Vol. X, p. 49. Kögel assigns them satirical songs (*Grundriss*, p. 49): "Satirical poetry must have been current at an early period among a people with whom gnomic verse was a favorite form. Common to both types of poetry is epigrammatic acumination, they are different in that satirical verse is made for singing."

⁴ I ponder at this juncture the words of Tacitus (*Annales*, Bk. I, chap. 65): "Nox per diversa inquires, quum barbari festis epulis, laeto cantu aut truci sonore subjecta vallium ac resultantis saltus complerent" and (*Historiae*, Bk. V, chap. 15): "Nox apud barbaros cantu aut clamore, nostris per iram et minas acta."

Now critics have felt that the mediaeval jongleur and spielmann are children of the Roman mimus for three reasons:¹

1. They have thought mimus as a dramatic performance existed as late as the fifth century.

2. When they met the term mimus (and its synonyms jocolator, scurra, thymelicus, histrio) in records from the fifth to the tenth century, they believed this term to mean the same that it did in pre-Christian Rome.

3. No other ancestry for early mediaeval realistic art was visible to them, because of their preconceived idea that the Dark Ages could not bear such fruit unaided.

1. *Fifth-century drama*

If there had been a mimic drama in Rome when the empire fell there would indeed be ground for the assumption that it lived on into the Middle Ages, but all the records cited by Reich² furnish no weightier arguments for the existence of such a drama than Grysar was able to produce fifty years before.³ In fact these very records show clearly enough that such a drama did not exist, for they are in large part the observations of men who were in a position to know of what they spoke, and nowhere, as Glock shows convincingly step by step, do they speak of mimus as a dramatic performance.⁴ We may therefore once and for all dismiss the specious theory of Reich and Sathas⁵ that either in Europe or in Asia a definite mimic drama lived on into the Middle Ages.⁶

¹ A fourth "reason" given by Piper in his *Spielmannsdichtung* (1887), p. 3, I scarcely have the heart to cite; it sounds so absurd. He says: "That the unity of Roman scurra and German minstrel is an actual one is proven by the identity of their characteristic traits." Such reasoning, however, is not unique with Piper, as an examination of Weinhold, *Die deutschen Frauen im Mittelalter* (1851), pp. 351 ff.; Köpke, *Ottomische Studien* (1869), Vol. II, p. 176, will show. If such argument count for aught, many a performer on the modern *Überbrett* is likewise "identical with the Roman scurra."

² In his book *Der Mimus* (1903).

³ *Wiener Sitzungsberichte*, Vol. XII (1854), pp. 331 ff.

⁴ *Zeitschr. f. vergl. Literaturgesch.*, Vol. XVI (1905), pp. 27 ff.

⁵ *Ἱστορικὸν δοκίμιον περὶ τοῦ θεάτρον τῶν βυζαντινῶν* (1878), a view recently upheld by Tunison, *Dramatic Traditions of the Dark Ages* (1905), although sufficiently disproved by Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Literatur 527-1423* (1897)², p. 644; see also Chambers, *Mediaeval Stage*, Vol. I, p. 17.

⁶ Therefore Chambers is in error when he says (*op. cit.*, p. 83): "The Roman mimus was essentially a player of farces; that and little else. It is of course open to any one to suppose that the mimus went down in the seventh century playing farces, and that his like appeared in the fifteenth century playing farces, and that not a farce was played

We may then disregard the words of Heinrich Morf and of any other historian who finds actors engaged in dramatic production in Europe during the Dark Ages,¹ for such words must for the present at least rest either on pure assumption or on the insecure and disingenuous combinations of Emil Reich.

2. *The term mimus and its synonyms in records of the Dark Ages*

More than thirty years ago Paul Meyer assigned to the mimi the beginnings of both Provençal and French literature² and Leon Gautier agreed with him.³ Gaston Paris, with what would appear a surer insight, believed the mediaeval minstrel represented a merging of the mimi with the Germanic scopas.⁴ Meyer says:

The point of departure for both [Provençal and French literature] is the same, and it is indeed humble. Testimonies which have been more than once collected, and which follow one another from the end of the Roman empire far into the Middle Ages, teach us of the existence of a class of individuals designated by the ancient names of *scurrae*, *thymelici*, later *joculatores*, public entertainers. They cross, without disappearing, the distress of the Merovingian and Carolingian eras. We meet them again in the eleventh century flourishing throughout Gaul.

Now let us see what Meyer has done. Without specifying in any case just what the work of these mimi was (*scurrae*, *thymelici*, *joculatores*) he makes this work of theirs the point of departure for

between. But is it not more probable on the whole that he preserved at least the rudiments of the art of acting, and that when the appointed time came the despised and forgotten farce blossomed forth once more as a vital and effective form of literature?"

¹ Morf says in his "Die romanischen Literaturen" pp. 144, 441 (*Kultur der Gegenwart*, I, xi, 1 [1909]): "From the days of the church fathers on there was no lack of clerical invective against the mimus. When because of the political and social downfall of the Roman empire the wealthy class and the great centers of culture had vanished, the Roman theater likewise fell, the drama disappeared, and the dramatic troupes crumbled and scattered. The mimus who till now had lived in companies of actors journeyed alone or with his mima as a wandering player through a world which had become barbarian. He amused his audiences by the practice of every profane art—music, singing, joking and juggling. The soil that had fostered his expensive maintenance in companies was gone, and thereafter dramatic operations on a large scale gave way to individual performances of a precarious and petty sort. The name mimus yielded to the title jocolator ("jongleur"). As jocolator scenicus this person is the continuator of that comic theater which, although outside of written tradition, existed in Romania through all the centuries."

² *Romania*, Vol. V (1876), p. 260.

³ *Les epopées françaises*, Vol. II (1892)², pp. 4 ff.

⁴ *La littérature française au moyen-âge* (1890)², p. 36; cf. also Chambers, *Mediaeval Stage* (1903), Vol. I, pp. 23 ff.

mediaeval Provençal and French literature.¹ Why does he do this? Because mimi in Rome furnished one sort of entertainment and mediaeval minstrels in central Europe furnished another sort of entertainment five hundred years later, and in the interval between the two the ancient names for entertainer, *scurra*, *thymelicus*, etc., are continued. Although I believe the looseness of this method is obvious I shall be at some pains to show how illogical I think Meyer's contention is.

Of course the ancient names for entertainer continue all through the Dark Ages, and deep into mediaeval times; we hear again and again of *mimi*, *joculatores*, *scurrae*, etc. Why should we not? *Mimus* had meant and long continued to mean entertainer, juggler, minstrel, poet. If a man of high or low degree chanced to be regarded by the common people of the seventh, eighth, or ninth centuries as an acceptable poet, that man was called *mimus*.

Of course the names continue. We hear of mime in sixteenth-century France²—in the farce *Maistre Mimin*—and much has been made of the fact. Why not make much of the fact that we have mimes and minstrels and jugglers in the twentieth century? Could

¹ If we make one thing the literary source of another, if we make the work of Roman *mimi* the source of the work of mediaeval jongleurs, then we mean the first thing is the direct and ascertainable source of the second thing. We do not mean that vaguely and despite our utter lack of proof the first thing is in a general sort of way perhaps in its age what the second thing is in its later time.

If we find, that is, in the work of any mediaeval jongleur forms, phrases, types of expression or of character, themes, ideas which are identical with, or similar to, the manner of Roman *mimi*, then and only then can we make mime spiritual ancestor of the jongleur. But if all these matters with which the work of the jongleur has to do are referred back to fifth-century Roman *mimi* simply because the Latin words for entertainer are not done away with in the records which mark the interim between that time and the time of the jongleur, then we have no right to make Roman *mimus* spiritual ancestor to mediaeval jongleur.

For, if such a thing were permissible, we could trace back our mediaeval *mimi* to an antiquity more hoar than that indicated by the mimic dances to the phallic, fat-bellied spirits of fertility in the ninth century B. C. Schröder, proceeding from the theory of Silvain Lévi and Hertel that certain dialogue-songs in the *Rigveda* are texts of the oldest known dramatic-musical performances, has recently made it likely that these songs owe their inclusion in the canon of the book to their use as mysteries or cult-dramas. The hymns in burlesque manner he regards as mimes, one of which he calls "The Drunken Indra" (quoted from the review by E. H. in *Litterarisches Zentralblatt* (1909), col. 19, of von Schröder's *Mysterium und Mimus im Rigveda* (1908)). It would, indeed, be a long line of honorable descent if we might thus trace our way from Gerhard Hauptmann (see Reich, Vol. I, p. 894) to dances which occurred centuries before the mimic poems in the *Rigveda*. But who would call the author of such a mimic poem from, say, 1500 B. C. a spiritual ancestor of Hauptmann!

² Cf. Reich, *Der Mimus*, pp. 849 ff., and Petit de Julleville, *Répertoire du théâtre comique en France au moyen-âge* (1886), p. 156; Chambers, *Mediaeval Stage*, p. 83.

the continuance of these names not be made to mean that we of today owe all our realistic portrayal in literature, all our magic of the theater directly to the Roman *saltimbanques* who set some Trimalchio's dinner table in a roar?

Names continue. All words do which symbolize general concepts. We hear of "comedy" and "tragedy" all the way from barbarian Rome to this very day; likewise of "epic" and "romance" and "lyric."¹ But who will claim that there is a constant tradition of any one of these great divisions of literature from then till now? They have come and gone, risen and faded and fallen—the pressure of a changing world has shaped them. Church and popular festival, old religion and new philosophy, time of reform and season of indulgence, ephemeral fads and enduring verities—these are all mirrored somewhat in the realistic prose and poetry of the period which separates us from the dead past. And this sort of thing we owe by direct tradition to Roman *saltimbanques*? I doubt it.²

¹ Comedy and tragedy during the Middle Ages were completely lost sight of except in name; cf. von Schack, *Gesch. d. dramatischen Lit. u. Kunst in Spanien*, Vol. I (1854)², p. 25; Piper, *Archiv. f. Literaturgesch.*, Vol. V (1875), p. 494; Cloetta, *op. cit.*, p. 2; Glock, *op. cit.*, p. 29. The epic is dead and yet the name is on the lips of all exactly as if it existed today; modern romances are very different things from mediaeval ones, etc. But who could read these things clearly from casual mention of the names of these literary types in widely separated records?

² In "a general way" everything reverts to something before it; in "a general way," then, modern jugglers and mimes are descended from ancient prototypes, just as modern stone-masons or cobblers are. (I choose cobblers because of the fine irony with which Winterfeld dismisses Herzog's contention that no connection existed between ancient and mediaeval mimes: "Also—Schuster gab es, bloss sie konnten keine Schuhe mehr machen?" Cf. *Herrigs Archiv*, Vol. CXIV [1905], p. 49, and *Berliner philologische Wochenschrift* [1904], No. 34.) Why try to make modern cobblers the children of Roman shoemakers of the fifth century? The boots of barbarian Rome are not the boots of nowadays. They differ in shape, color, materials, size, cost, method of making, purpose, and appeal. Of what avail to build up a theory regarding them in Rome and the direct indebtedness of modern boots to them, on the basis of numerous references to boots, shoes, slippers, pumps, and spats in chronicles and decretals of the Dark Ages, particularly if these references are unfailingly confused and indistinct?

The danger of misreading such records is obvious. A pamphlet of Kelle's is at hand to furnish a clever illustration (*Wiener Sitzungsberichte*, Vol. CLXI [1908], No. 2) of the absurdity to which the hunting of reminiscences of German paganism in mediaeval decretals may lead. "Chori saecularium," "cantica puellarum" we learn with a sigh are not the uproar of dance-rounds, not the immodest sport of girls' songs forcing their way to the ears of nuns in the cloister, as Wackernagel imagined; nor are they profane lays and ballads of maidens which early in the ninth century, according to good pagan custom, still crowded into the church and its vicinity and later were sung on holidays in the street and in houses, as Müllenhoff and Scherer asserted. They are just plain statements concerning the religious anthems of the laity and the hymnic songs of nuns. We can not even have longer, it seems, the heathen sacrificial meal in connection with "convivia in ecclesia."

3. *No other ancestry than Roman mimus visible?*

It is still difficult for us to regard the tenth century sanely. Our attitude, which should be simply one of historical understanding based upon an examination of the relevant facts, is apt to be one of either admiration or reproach. Adulation, if we are still under the spell of that nineteenth-century Romanticism which substitutes poetry for philology and gives us delicate analyses *à la* Simrock of the nature myths, the heroic legend, the theogony of northern antiquity.¹ Reproach, if we generalize from purely fortuitous or incidental sources of knowledge and hark back to the sermons, the satires, and the church-penitentials to show that in the tenth century intelligence was at a low ebb and moral integrity extremely rare.²

But if the critic of this time tries to free himself from preconception of it and proceeds toward a sympathetic insight into its life through careful study I cannot see how he will fail so to appreciate its achievements as to believe this tenth century incapable of producing fresh and realistic prose and poetry of its own initiative, and quite without the aid of any Roman vaudeville performer or his descendant. For the tenth century is in many ways a great age.

A thirst for knowledge is in it, as in the sixteenth century, even though both periods are in a sense times of preparation and of unfulfilled promises.³ The humanists Richer of St. Remy and Gerbert of Rheims are not more isolated phenomena than were Thomas Platter and Johannes Butzbach.⁴ A sheer delight in worldly literature penetrates every monastery.⁵ Monks cultivate profane themes,

¹ Cf. Uhl, *Winiliod* (1908), p. 1.

² Cf. Scherer's essay "Mittelalter und Gegenwart" in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (1874), pp. 322 f.; also Charles Langlois, *La société française au xiii^e siècle* (1904)², pp. ii-xvi.

³ See Scherer's interesting comparison of the two epochs in his *Gesch. d. deut. Dichtung*, pp. 2 ff.

⁴ Read of Richer's trip from Rheims to Chartres, that he might see the *Logic* of Hippocrates, *Richeri historiae*, ed. Waitz (1877), Bk. IV, chap. 50, and Ker's account of Gerbert, *Dark Ages*, pp. 198 ff. Nothing seems to warrant Egger's view (*L'hellénisme en France*, Vol. I, p. 51) that such figures as Richer and Gerbert in the tenth century, Scotus Erigena in the ninth, are exceptions and prodigies.

⁵ Notker Labeo, for example, was urged to translate into German not only the *Bucolics* of Vergil, but the *Andria* of Terence; cf. Kelle, *Gesch. d. deut. Lit.*, Vol. I, pp. 233 f. We also recall how Godehard, on assuming his duties in a new cloister, had Horace and Cicero's *Letters* sent to him. For further reference to monastic study of "frivolous" literature cf. Scherer, *Geistliche Poeten der deutschen Kaiserzeit* (1874, 1875), 2 vols.

and minstrels themes from sacred story.¹ Scherer's division of the poets of this day into two parties: one guild the ecclesiastics, the pillars of Christianity and of all really Scriptural culture in literary form, the other guild the minstrels, the wandering folk-singers, the inheritors of paganism and its poetry, cannot be accepted.² Nor did these two guilds "fight each other tooth and nail."

Monks and minstrels get their material everywhere,³ wander far in search of it, incorporate it into chronicles and collections of exempla and stories and thus lay the foundations for the innumerable chapbooks and romances of future ages. A literary tradition is begun for the lighter forms of art, one that feeds and parallels oral transmission. We meet now not only the phrase "in cantilenis priscis cantantur" but "in veteribus libris legitur."⁴ Particularly after the coronation of Otto I in 962 do clerks and minstrels journey indefatigably southward, to come back freighted with strange wares in the way of tales and entertaining poems; many a jovial monk and scholar sets this contraband of religion into Latin lines. Soldiers and peddlers back from Italy, eager to boast, eager to please, con-

¹ The *Gesta Karoli* has profane themes. Fableaux (schwänke) and mendacious songs (cantilenae mendosae) fairly sprout in the cloisters and grammar schools of the cathedrals. Many of these have their origin in definitely-known occurrences and in connection with the games and holiday pranks of the pupils. Such license as Fitz-Stephen tells of in the monastery schools of a later day existed at least as early as the ninth century, and no occasion was too trivial for its exercise. Witness how the youth "sang mocking songs of Notker when they had drunk wine," [so tuönt noh kenuöge, singent fone démo der in fro ünreht uuéret] how Gunzo of Novara was lampooned in mischievous verses (lascivulis versibus) by a youngster of St. Gall because the famous grammarian had used an accusative for an ablative. For other records see Kelle, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 205 f.; Allen, *Modern Philology*, Vol. VI, pp. 21, 398. Godehard, bishop of Hildesheim (1022-38) proves that monks and clerks are authors and amateurs of profane realistic poetry when he says: "Quoddam autem talium genus, illorum scilicet, qui vel in monachico vel canonico vel etiam Graeco habitu per regiones et regna discurrent, quos et Platonis more Perypatheticos irridendo cognominavit, illos, inquam, prorsus exprobrando quasi execrabatur."—*Monum. Germ. hist. Scriptores*, Vol. XI, p. 207. On the other hand the minstrels often took their subjects from sacred legend and story: the theme of little John the monk is from the *Vitae patrum* (cf. Allen, *Modern Philology*, Vol. V, p. 468), the Triumphus Sancti Remacii (eleventh century) is by a "cantator quidam jocularis" (*Monum. Germ. hist. Scriptores*, Vol. XI, p. 456), etc.

² Cf. Scherer's essay on the intellectual life in mediaeval Austria in his *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, p. 130.

³ Minstrels borrow their materials from the old myths, the animal-fable, legend, heroic story drolly distorted (*Saleman and Morolt*), history, and daily life. "In this way a multitude of German tales, legends, and fableaux certainly owe their origin to the activity of these minstrels in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries. This time was apparently the richest quarry for them."—Müllenhoff, *Sagen, Märchen, Lieder*, p. xix.

⁴ De fundatione monasterii Tegrinsee; Pez, *Thesaurus anecdotarum novus*, Vol. III, Pt. ii, p. 493.

tribute their quota. The old story is being retold: German armies are crossing the Alps, sweeping victoriously over northern Italy (this time Lombardy), stopping a while near the center of the world's culture to gather their spoils of war, streaming homeward laden with booty, some of gold—most of civilization and of art.

Now this is the sort of age which critics think could not bear rich fruitage of its own. And so we are asked to find its origin in the Italian *mimus*. Heyne pictures these *mimi*¹ increasing in German territory during the migration period, venturing out singly or in troops to the village or the isolated manor, following the bands of warriors, presenting in camp their pantomimes, puppet-shows, sword-plays, gladiatorial exercises, and arts of *legerdemain*.² He says these *mimi* outlasted the migration period and continued to thrive during the following epochs.

Let Johannes Kelle continue the tale.³ He has gathered his information from the most diverse sources from fourth to thirteenth century and this is the result: In the beginning of the ninth century, ever increasing in numbers, there roamed throughout the Frankish empire the descendants of the old *mimi* and *histriones*, who had become completely demoralized in the Merovingian epoch. Pipers, drummers, fiddlers, singers, dancers, jugglers, blood-letters, barbers, cuppers⁴ had likewise in the ninth century become indispensable to the Germanic people, much as the latter despised them because of their un-German venality and their insatiable greed. They added luster to every festive occasion by their dances, obscene songs, topical hits, and *legerdemain*. The Roman *mimi* were everywhere most welcome guests, but especially at wedding banquets.

And Winterfeld may add the epilogue: In the middle of the eleventh century he thinks "it would seem a matter of course that mimes shot out of the earth like mushrooms after a rain," he avers

¹ In his essay on "Unehrliche Hantierungen" in *Das altdeutsche Handwerk* (1908), pp. 101 ff.

² These phrases of Heyne are apparently based upon no surer a foundation than the moonlit picture by Freytag (*Bilder aus der deutschen Vergangenheit*, Vol. II, Pt. i, pp. 445 f.) of the well-known passage in Procopius (*De bello vandalico*, Bk. II, chap. 6) "Roman jugglers and mimes presented before the bloody Vandal hordes the obscenest pantomimes." Cf. Crome's preface to *Das altdeutsche Handwerk*, p. vi.

³ *Gesch. d. deut. Lit.*, Vol. I, p. 70.

⁴ This list is from the *Sachsenspiegel*, ed. Homeyer (1861)³, p. 194.

that Notker and Roswitha owe the best of their work to these mimi, and ends by saying that only through the mime and his continued existence can one understand and explain the literary development of the centuries.¹

We are, then, asked to believe the following: Roman mimes before and after the fall of the empire spread northward in the pursuit of their profession. They adapted themselves so snugly to the ideas of their new environment, by catering to old social needs and creating novel ones, that they handed down their art from father to son, from teacher to pupil for eight centuries. They became the mouthpiece for every sort of popular entertainment outside the pale of literary transmission.

Now, if this be so, we can discover the traces of these thousands of all-important people not only in the sorry lists of their class-names in dusty chronicle and decretal, but here and there and everywhere in the lighter and more realistic writings of their day. We shall find, as Winterfeld wants us to, these mimi peering out from behind fables, tales, romances, dramas, fableaux, satires, historical poems, sacred ballads, and lyric poems.² And here I shall look for

¹ *Herrigs Archiv*, Vol. CXIV, pp. 74, 49.

² There is something illogical in according the mimi during the Dark Ages a lion's share in molding and continuing all the realistic and popular themes of these times, and at the same breath excluding them from active participation in that one enduring form of poetic narrative and expression which for centuries as yet unnumbered held the German fancy captive: the heroic epic. Ages before the minstrel-romances *Herzog Ernst* and *König Rother* Winterfeld's mimes should have "polished up the motives of native heroic legend with adventurous journeys and coarse jokes," if these mimi are what he supposes them to be. Then too, we should find an explanation for some things in Ekkehard's *Waltharius*, and it would be the descendant of a Roman mime who furnished accidental plot and bye-work for the materials of the Latin Nibelung-story.

If I were convinced these southern mimi played the rôle in the literature of the Dark Ages which Winterfeld pretends, I should not hesitate to find in their activity an explanation for various puzzling matters in the early transmission of German popular epic stories and legends. No false "piety" would deter me. A fine characterization of such "piety" breathes in Michel Bréal's essay on the first influence of Rome on the Germanic world (*Journal des savants* [1889], pp. 624, 626, 697). I should believe, for instance, that the heroic songs of the Goths were first and best and most enduring of all Germanic popular ballads because they came closest to an appreciation of the work of the Roman mimi and were most affected by it. If such mimes as Winterfeld's were mine, I should understand why much of the older epic material was in the form of a comparatively short dramatic ballad (Ker, *Epic and Romance* [1908]²; Heusler, *Lied und Epos* [1905]), not one that could be used as a single chapter in the framework of a long narrative epic, but a compact and individual unit. For I should realize how close such work is to other effort of which Winterfeld suspects the mime: historical ballad, for instance.

Bédier (*Les légendes épiques* [1908]) has recently had strange tales to tell us of how certain *chansons de geste* originated and first achieved their popularity. Whatever acceptance his conclusions may gain in the field of French epic legends, one matter of

them. Now unless I discover traces of their handiwork here in no uncertain way I shall disbelieve—as I have good right to—that there is any connection between Roman mime and mediaeval jongleur and spielmann. It is, of course, in the literary records of the Dark Ages that I shall hunt, for if the thread of continuity snap at this point, it is little likely that it was ever thereafter mended. And now to work.

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general import he has given us. He has shown that epic ballads (heroic songs) did not mysteriously evolve the moment some conspicuous deed of prowess was done, and then go echoing in oral transmission down the centuries until some tardy mediaeval person wrote a romance based upon these ballads. Rather was a deliberate art requisite at the beginning, and literary instead of oral preservation to be supposed. Now as the brightest and most adaptable poets in Europe for six critical centuries or so were the descendants of Roman *mimi*, if they were as Winterfeld supposes, it would be they who accounted for the humor and life of older epic material, for the first-hand description of it, for its realism and its dramatic pressure. Such *mimi* would then teach us why the German epic is not one sort of thing: an unalloyed alliterative poetry, the treasured formula of generations of scopas, but rather a mosaic of elements, diverse in manner and matter, wherein we find lyric and pastoral and dramatic and gnomic ingredients.

Were Winterfeld's *mimi* mine, I should account for the disappearance of the old alliterative poetry and the appearance of end-rime, not by saying it sprang from a degeneration or torpescence of the stave-form itself, but hold it due to the influence of Latin popular poetry brought into Germany by *mimi*. I should then believe the fall from favor of the old-fashioned harp-playing vassal the result, not of the rise of the Frankish empire and the consequent decline of the smaller courts, but of the new popularity of Italian *mimi*. The demoralization, or humanizing, of the mythical elements in heroic poetry, the appearance in it of new personalities (Henry, the Ottos, their supporters and opponents), the newer sort of epic poetry dealing with contemporary events—these things might find explanation, not so much in the national consciousness which Germany developed under the Saxon emperors, as in the successful practice of poetry by the guild of Italian *mimi*. A shorter type of lyrical popular ballad which appears in the ninth and tenth century might, too, be conditioned by new music and melodies introduced by *mimi*—if they were only such as we are asked to believe them.